



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

CAC MEETING MINUTES

December 12, 2019

In Attendance

Members: Jane Bennett, Louie Bouma, Marc Cooke, Matt Graveley, Everett Headley, Denley Loge, Bill Mitchell, Theresa Lunn, Jim Olson, Greg Price, Thomas Puchlerz, Matthew Quinlan, & Joanne Weimer.

Staff: Randy Arnold, Lori Brooks, Cannon Colegrove, Vivaca Crowser, Loren Flynn, Clint Hultberg, Joe Jaquith, Molly Locati, Chrissy Oschell, Tyler Parks, Pat Saffel, & Mike Thompson.

Guests: Tim Aldrich, (Commissioner) Kyan Bishop, (State Parks Planner) Angie Grove, (Chair, State Parks and Recreation Board) & Ron Jendro, (Legislative Liaison)

Welcome & introductions

Randy Arnold welcomed all in attendance and Vivaca Crowser gave an overview of the evening agenda before turning the floor over to Tyler Parks, FWP's Region 2 Wolf Management Specialist.

Wildlife/R2 Wolf Update

Tyler introduced himself, sharing some background of how he ended up in his position as FWP's R2 Wolf Specialist. With roots in the Bitterroot Valley, Tyler said he felt fortunate to be able to live & work where he grew up.

Tyler updated the council on wolf monitoring. Historically, Montana FWP monitored wolf populations using minimum counts for both packs and individuals. When there were only a few packs on the landscape minimum counts were an effective way of identifying trends in the population. In 2005 only 45 packs were identified by Wolf Specialists and by 2010 108 packs were recognized. Currently, there are more than 124 packs in the State. To keep up with this growth FWP needed a new method to monitor its wolf population. FWP is now using the Patch Occupancy Model (POM) to estimate the population. The 2018 POM wolf population estimate was 819 wolves. Statewide harvest ranges from 220 to 295 wolves each year. The R2 wolf population and harvest remains stable and consistent with the last few years.

State Parks

Kyan Bishop, Loren Flynn, and Angie Grove shared on the recent planning process and status of Montana's newly updated *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. The new SCORP, titled "Sustaining Montana's Outdoor Recreation Legacy 2020-2024," is a planning document which offers a five-year strategic framework to identify trends, issues, and challenges facing the state's outdoor recreation and natural resources, and provides recommendations for outdoor recreation priorities across the state.

The plan can be found online:

<http://stateparks.mt.gov/about-us/scorp.html?tab=scorp2020#scorp2020SectionHeader>

Six core goals of the report: (not listed in order of importance)

- Promote outdoor recreation opportunities for all Montanans
- Enhance public access to outdoor recreation resources and facilities
- Support the economic vitality of communities and the state
- Improve quality of life through outdoor recreation experiences
- Adapt outdoor recreation for a changing environment
- Honor Montana's outdoor legacy

Parks staff are interested in hearing feedback from the CAC on the plan generally, on specific goals and recommendations, and on opportunities mentioned for further action should members have ideas or interest in being involved.

This statewide draft plan was developed through a collaborative process between Montana State Parks, the University of Montana, and the SCORP Advisory Council, which was comprised of outdoor recreation representatives from the public and private sectors, including local, state and federal agencies and advocacy groups.

The University of Montana held three facilitated group discussions in Billings, Butte, and Kalispell in March of 2019. The discussions were attended by over 150 members of the public. The purpose of the meetings was to ask outdoor recreation leaders and interested citizens to identify the needs, demands, and vision for outdoor recreation in Montana. Results from the group discussions were paired with existing recreation data to establish the plan's goals and recommendations.

In addition to its value as a planning document, the completion of a SCORP is required of every state to be eligible for Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF). Since 1965, Montana has received over \$38 million from this federally funded program supporting outdoor recreation projects in Montana communities. Montana State Parks administers the state-side LWCF for Montana.

Fisheries

Chrissy Oschell, FWP's R2 Fishing Access Site Manager, discussed use trends on the Blackfoot River in relation to the Blackfoot River Recreation Management Plan, that was adopted in 2010 and is still currently in use. The Blackfoot River in Region 2 is seeing an increase in pressure from all types of water-based recreation. FWP's monitoring efforts are showing that use (both commercial and non-commercial) is approaching all-time highs in some reaches of the river. The 2010 Blackfoot River Management Plan describes the desired conditions of seven reaches of the river with higher use expected in the lower reaches where the Blackfoot enters more developed recreation areas and more urban settings. The use in the upper Blackfoot and the North Fork of the Blackfoot is increasing steadily, potentially triggering management action.

The Fisheries Division is seeking suggestions and feedback from the Citizen's Advisory Council as it considers next steps. A stakeholder meeting is planned for mid-winter to discuss the available data and the path forward.

Wrap-up

Vivaca Crowser will send out a Doodle poll to find the next meeting date.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10pm. Next meeting TBD.